

#49 15-16

Psalm 119:97-104

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Luke 18:1-8

2 Timothy 3:14 - 4:5

God Breathed the Word

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All scripture is *inspired by God* and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. ^{4:1}In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: ²proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having *itching ears*, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. ⁵As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

For those of you who know about my MDiv thesis, or have participated in any group discussing Joseph Campbell, you may be curious as to how I deal with this scripture today. "The Power of Myth" is something near and dear to my understanding of spirituality and faith. So reading a text, which has been used for centuries by one party or another to discredit someone else as having false teachings based on myth may seem problematic, in the very least. So allow me to present this scripture in a way that can reveal more of its true meaning and nuances.

First of all most scholars now attribute this not to Paul but to a "third generation" Christian - post Paul. It was most likely written in the 2nd century in Asia Minor (now Turkey). This was attributed to Paul to give it more authority to the hearers, more weight as being an apostolic writing. This is not to say that it is any less divinely inspired, but as a tool to help the hearers trust the message that was being shared. Giving credit to someone they trust helps the hearers to trust the divine words.

As I read this, knowing that the letters from Paul were some of the first writings closest to the time of Jesus' life and death, I wondered, "what scriptures might be referred to in Chapter 3 verse 15 where it is said he has known the sacred writings?" Well, it is unclear. The evidence points that it was not Jewish scripture. So this reinforced the idea of where and what was going on at the time this was written. It was relatively early in the Christian experience, yet far enough away in time for there to be a collection of writings that have been deemed sacred, upon which Timothy was raised.

Now, this is still a delicate time in the early Christian experience. All kinds of misconceptions and misleading teachings have come forth claiming to be the right teachings. And honestly, I'm not sure much has changed since then, regardless of how established we are now with a sanctioned collection of writings and millennium of practice. We can still be confused as to what is the right teachings and what is not.

So even though this scripture was written during a time of emerging development of this fledgling faith, there are still confusions. We may still wonder what are the characteristics of sound teaching, which are necessary to counter false teachings, which is what this scripture was all about.

In chapter 3 verse 16, come across the words: *inspired by God*. The Greek word there, "theopneustos" means literally, "God inspired" -- 'theo' - meaning God and 'pneuma' which can mean wind, breath or spirit. All scripture is breathed by God - scripture is alive and living and part of the fabric of all of life - even the plants need breath to live - our bodies need breath to live - our souls need God to live as full human beings. Anything less than a dependency on God's inspiration is less than a life. The dependency on trusting and

reading and caring and learning and struggling with God's will is as important to us as breath. And this was the urgency of the times when this scripture was written, as well as today.

I would like to read the first 13 verses of Chapter 3 - what led up to this:

^{3:1}You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. ²For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them! ⁶For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, ⁷who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸As Janes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth. ⁹But they will not make much progress, because, as in the case of those two men, their folly will become plain to everyone. ¹⁰Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹my persecutions and suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹²Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. ¹³But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived.

It sounds like not much has changed in 2,000 years. The challenge is still the same - how do we make maintaining our integrity in Christ a priority in the face of the easy evil that can gain power so readily? How can we "proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching" now in the face of daily barrage of those lovers of pleasure rather than being lovers of God?

I love the quote about people having *itching ears*. Basically it is saying they have an insatiable curiosity. And if don't catch this insatiable curiosity with the wonders of God, we lose them to all the other attention seeking people and greedy people who use this gift of life and other humans for their own benefit. Trusting that people are insatiably curious, we can connect with them with the confidence of the author of this Epistle who wrote: "I solemnly urge you: ²proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching." Trusting that God is in every breath - trusting that God is behind the truth of every word - trusting that God will rescue us from all persecutions! Will bring us to a place of peace and joy and understanding in spite of our tribulations - trusting in the light at the end of the tunnel, we can help so many people know the grace and the love of God.

Now, one of the issues that was being confronted in this 2nd letter to Timothy was the prevalence of questions regarding the actual death and resurrection of Jesus. Some claimed he never lived, some claimed he never actually died, some claimed all kind of things. The Jesus mythology ran amok in those days! And the truth that was being held on to so vehemently was that Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected. In that order. This is vital for the true meaning of God among us to be realized.

For God to come amongst us as a human - with no more or no less physical abilities than any other human - proves to us the potential that each human does have. The fact that Jesus suffered and died, connects God to us in such intimate ways that cannot be denied - we suffer, God suffers with us - God knows, because Christ knows - Christ showed us that he knows and he cares about every detail of our lives, including the pain. And the resurrection of Christ is essential to understanding the will of God because it proved that there is, in truth, no separation between the spiritual and the human - not even what we perceive as death can cut us off from divinity! And this is what needed to be remembered and taught in the face of silly superstitions and evil, ego centered souls!

God is breathing the Word into our souls now and then, and will be forever more - Divinity is our calling, and nothing can separate us from that! Not. A. Thing! So Beware of all that is unholy! AMEN